

Top Secret

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NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE DAILY CABLE

Friday 28 April 1978

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NATIONAL SECURITY INFORMATION

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National Intelligence Daily Cable for Friday, 28 April 1978.

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The NID Cable is for the purpose of informing senior US officials.

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AFGHANISTAN: Coup Attempt

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[] Afghan President Daoud may have been overthrown and replaced by a leftist military government, although the situation remains highly fluid and confused. The Soviets may have mixed views on a leftist coup in Afghanistan because it could complicate their relations with other countries of the area. Afghanistan's other two immediate neighbors, Pakistan and Iran, would see the installation of a leftist government as a threat to their security.

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[] The rebellion against Daoud may have been sparked by the arrest late Wednesday of the leaders of the pro-Soviet Communist Party. The government had moved against the Communist leaders in an apparent attempt to preclude further demonstrations of Communist strength. On 19 April the supposedly weak Communist Party mobilized a well-disciplined procession of about 15,000 for the funeral of a party leader killed two days earlier.

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[] Fighting broke out about midday yesterday when a small force of tanks attacked government buildings, including the presidential palace and the Defense and Interior Ministries. A much larger, apparently pro-government, force arrived in Kabul about an hour later, and it soon appeared that the government would restore order. Air Force planes then intervened on the side of the rebels and tipped the balance in the rebels' favor. The US Embassy believes pro-Daoud forces may be moving on Kabul and that there could be further fighting today.

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[] As firing died down last night, the extent of the rebels' success was unclear, although they did control the radio station. Their broadcasts have given only the vaguest picture of their policies or who is leading their movement. What few indications they have given tend to place them considerably to the left of Daoud.

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[] While the Soviets are no doubt watching events in Kabul with great interest, we have had no indication that they were directly involved in or aware in advance of the coup attempt. Moscow has maintained contacts with the Afghan left since the 1920s, but it has always attempted to deal with whatever government was in power and to avoid any hint of interference in internal Afghan affairs.

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[] For at least the last decade the Soviets have meticulously favored state-to-state relations throughout South Asia. Although they may have been concerned about the future of their relations with Kabul when Daoud first came to power in 1973, over the past five years the Soviets have established a good working relationship with Daoud and the USSR has remained the predominant foreign power in Afghanistan.

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[] A leftwing coup in Afghanistan would raise suspicions about the Soviets in India, Iran, and Pakistan, and complicate Moscow's dealings with all three. It would undermine the long-standing Soviet claim that Afghanistan was an example of a small, poor state existing on the USSR's border without fear of Soviet meddling in its affairs.

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[] Whatever the outcome, the Soviets will count on Kabul's dependence on Soviet military and economic aid to ensure that the USSR remains the pervasive foreign influence in Afghanistan.

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[] The Shah of Iran's reactions will be determined by the orientation of the government that finally emerges in Afghanistan. He would view a leftist government there as adding to the danger facing Iran on its eastern flank. Iran's relations with its neighbors are already complicated by continuing political uncertainty in Pakistan.

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[] //If the new government is in full control, the Shah probably can do little about it, but he will see himself as increasingly threatened by the Soviets and as requiring even larger supplies of Western arms. If a substantial portion of the country remains in the control of anti-leftist forces, the Shah might be tempted to intervene in some fashion.//

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[] Pakistan shares Iran's concerns and would also be worried about the revival of a longstanding border dispute that Daoud had played down over the past two years.

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[] //If either the Iranians or the Pakistanis were to intervene militarily, they would run a substantial risk of a confrontation with the Soviets. This might well be a decisive deterrent.// []

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UN: Session on Disarmament

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[redacted] //The nonaligned states, already impatient with the lack of progress in disarmament negotiations, were further frustrated by the outcome of the recently concluded fifth and final session of the preparatory committee for the UN General Assembly Special Session on Disarmament. The nonaligned want the special session, scheduled to open on 23 May, to mark a fresh departure in arms control and disarmament efforts and to create greater opportunities for their participation and involvement. They increasingly feel that the US and USSR have adopted an approach designed to minimize the role of the UN and the special session in the disarmament process.//

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[redacted] //Deep differences persist among regional groups and members, as indicated by the disagreements over the draft documents prepared by the committee. The documents--a declaration on disarmament, a program of action, and a document on disarmament machinery--were to be adopted by consensus at the special session. The results of the Preparatory Committee have prompted some Third World delegates, however, to suggest that voting will be necessary if negotiating efforts fail to resolve the differences.//

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[redacted] //Although there are still significant difference concerning references to nuclear disarmament, conventional weapons, and non-use of force in the declaration on disarmament, the Preparatory Committee chairman, Carlos Ortiz de Rozas of Argentina, believes these can be worked out by consultation at the special session.//

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[] //The differing perceptions of what should be included in the program of action present the major obstacle, however. The program is considered the most important document because it may shape the UN disarmament agenda for the next several years. Nuclear disarmament and security assurances are the two major issues.//

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[] //The nonaligned states want the US and USSR to agree to negotiate nuclear disarmament measures going beyond SALT II and the comprehensive test ban, including a halt to nuclear weapons production and a "time-bound program" for reducing and eventually eliminating stockpiles. Efforts to produce a joint US-Soviet text on nuclear disarmament collapsed when Moscow insisted on the text Soviet delegates had introduced in the previous session of the Preparatory Committee. The Western texts, which are brief and very general, are unacceptable to the nonaligned.//

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[] //Another issue of particular interest to the non-aligned will be binding security assurances for non-nuclear-weapon states, along with the related topics of nuclear-weapon-free zones and zones of peace.//

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[] //In the area of disarmament machinery, the principal remaining issues will be the organization and procedures of the Conference of the Committee on Disarmament, notably its chairmanship and its relationship to the UN; revival of the UN Disarmament Commission; and the follow-on to the special session--either a second special session or a World Disarmament Conference.//

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[] //Expectations that either a SALT II treaty or a comprehensive test ban agreement would be concluded before the special session meets have been replaced by uncertainty and increased frustration at the slowness of those negotiations. Although it is not yet clear whether the nonaligned will vent this frustration at the special session, they could resort to disruptive tactics, such as rhetorical posturing and forcing votes on key issues. []

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INTERNATIONAL: Nuclear Energy

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[] *Non-Communist countries are scheduled to bring 28 nuclear power reactors, representing an electric generating capacity of 24,380 megawatts, into commercial service this*

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year--the largest annual gain in nuclear power capacity to date. Two of the reactors began commercial operation earlier this year and several others are currently being brought up to full power. Operating at a typical capacity rate of 60 percent, the new plants would provide the energy equivalent of nearly 650,000 barrels per day of oil.

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[] The 1978 gains would raise the total nuclear capacity of Non-Communist countries by 29 percent to almost 109,000 megawatts. The largest increase is projected for the US--eight reactors totaling 7,229 megawatts. New plants in West European countries will add 10,716 megawatts this year, and Japan is scheduled to bring 4,522 megawatts of new capacity on line.

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[] This year will also mark the entry into service of US-designed light water reactors in South Korea and Taiwan. These countries will join Argentina, India, and Pakistan as the only developing countries currently using nuclear energy to generate electricity.

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[] If most of the new plants remain on schedule, 1978 should be a boom year for electric utilities. Plants now reaching operational status are expected to provide electricity at much lower costs than competing power plants operating on fossil fuels. Court orders or government regulations--largely stemming from controversy over the ultimate disposal of radioactive wastes--may, however, prevent several of the plants from going into operation this year.

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[] The longer term market for nuclear power continues to be clouded by a variety of financial, technical, political, and environmental obstacles. Lead times continue to be long and uncertain; 13 of the 28 reactors scheduled for operation in 1978 have been on the drawing boards since 1969 or earlier. Orders for future nuclear units remain stagnant. []

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North Yemen

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[] Lt. Col. Ahmad al-Ghashmi, North Yemen's strongman since last October when he succeeded an assassinated fellow officer as chairman of the now-defunct Command Council, was sworn in as president last Sunday. He was elected for a five-year term by the new People's Assembly, whose members he recently appointed.

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[] Ghashmi has the difficult task of governing a country split by north-south, religious, and left-right differences. The country's strong tribal system and a contentious officer corps add to his problems. He has already moved to curb the power of a potential rival in the army by dispersing paratroop commander Alim's forces throughout the country. Further restructuring of the government and high-level personnel shifts are likely soon. []

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Upper Volta

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[] Upper Volta, under military control the past 12 years, is about to begin the process of returning to civilian rule. Deputies to the National Assembly will be elected Sunday and a presidential election will follow on 14 May. President Sangoule Lamizana, a moderate, pro-Western Army general who has ruled Upper Volta since 1966, is expected to win the presidential election over several other candidates. []

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